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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 QUITO 002920

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY POWELL; WHA/PDA; WHA/AND  
GUAYAQUIL FOR NOUHRA

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SUBJECT: REINVIGORATING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY CULTURAL AND SPORTS  
PROGRAMS: EMBASSY QUITO RESPONSE

REF: State 222516

1. Embassy Quito submits the following information requested in reftel re "Reinvigorating Public Diplomacy Cultural and Sports Programs." Responses are keyed to reftel.

2. Question A: Which Mission objectives benefit from cultural programs or could be better supported by cultural programs?

3. While we use cultural programming to support all Mission goals whenever appropriate, cultural programs are especially effective in supporting MPP goals of increasing mutual understanding, strengthening democracy and supporting economic development because they often give us access to an audience that is difficult to reach. In addition, cultural programs help create a more receptive environment for the completion of Mission goals by deepening understanding of U.S. society and exposing audiences to aspects of American culture that they perhaps had not experienced before. For example, cultural programs help us access Ecuador's public universities, where significant currents of anti-Americanism make policy-based programming difficult.

4. Through our arts programs, we often target young, disadvantaged audiences who otherwise have little or no contact with the USG. When we organized a concert and workshop by a group of Afro-Latin musicians from New York, we brought together an ethnically diverse audience of young people from several provinces who are involved in anti-delinquency projects. Similarly, we have expanded on a cultural preservation project funded through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to create a series of performances called "Dialogues of Liberty." Under PAS-sponsorship, the amateur actors who portray important historical figures from Quito's past have traveled to almost every province to present the "Dialogues" to high school students. Speaking as Ecuadorians, they address many of the key issues important to the Mission (e.g. strengthening democracy, equal opportunity, individual liberty).

5. Question B. What kind of specific cultural or sports programs or initiatives are, or would be, most effective in supporting those objectives?

6. We have found one of our most simple tools to be among the most effective: paper shows. We have worked successfully several times to program various IIP paper shows in high schools, small communities and other venues. In each case, we work with a local partner to organize a series of debates or discussions (usually among students) on the topic of the paper show. Recently, we organized a month-long series of debates based on the Human Rights paper show, which was displayed in three major public high schools serving 4,500 students. In a closing event in which the Ambassador participated, the students presented their conclusions as to the most important human rights.

7. The best cultural programs are often specifically tailored to Ecuador. For example, one of our most successful post-initiated arts programs was an Earth Day photo contest entitled "My Galapagos." Every high school senior on the three inhabited islands of the Galapagos was given a disposable camera and asked to photograph something he or she felt was important to the future of the islands and to write a short essay explaining why. The 20 winning photos that became part of the final exhibit depict the range of issues confronting the Galapagos, from protecting the rich environment to controlling pollution to increasing economic opportunity (all Mission themes).

8. We see good potential to reach our target audiences - including those most opposed to our policies - through the medium of film. A well-selected series of independent and less-commercialized U.S. films would be a powerful way to refute misconceptions and stereotypes about the U.S. Washington's help in "curating" such a series and handling logistical arrangements would be invaluable. We would also be interested in offerings of newer performing art forms -- not those aimed at art school mavens, but rather at mass youth -- such as Spanish-speaking DJ artists or hip hop

performers.

19. But we have found that visual and performing arts programs that feature high-concept, vanguard forms of expression are less useful in Ecuador. Often, they have the most appeal within a narrow segment of the arts community, or reach an elite audience that already has a great deal of exposure to the U.S. For example, one local partner with whom we worked to bring an artist to participate in an international art show commented that the artwork was too "experimental" and asked us to bring a more traditional painter for the next festival.

110. To best use our cultural programming resources, we carefully design our programs to reach our target audiences of young people, indigenous and other minority groups, economically disadvantaged people, etc. We have found the best way to do that is to design a program that is more interactive rather than exhibits and performances that tend to be less participative. We have not had much recent experience with sports programming, but believe it may be very effective here. A planned program in early 2006 will give us a good feel for the potential for that kind of programming.

111. At the same time, there is strong value in associating ourselves every year or two with top-flight, marquee talent that draws elites and extensive media coverage. A recent example was the concert in Quito by renowned U.S. violinist Joshua Bell. With a modest grant, we were able to distribute some tickets and host a reception in his honor attended by the kind of top cultural and social elites that would never turn out for less-known talent and only notice our cultural diplomacy when it happens at this level.

112. Question C. What constraints does your mission face in effectively utilizing cultural, arts, and sports programs?

113. Our main constraint is capacity - both the capacity of the local community to absorb and benefit from cultural programs and our own staffing capacity to organize these events (we have one FSO and one programming FSN, both of whom have other responsibilities). In addition, our local partners require a great deal of financial and logistical support in order to ensure a program or event is completed successfully. There are very few organizations that have sufficient staff or logistical capability to carry out major programs.

114. Question D. How have you been able to partner with the private sector to sponsor cultural/sports events or to overcome resource constraints?

115. We often give grants to support the participation of U.S. visual and performing artists in events organized by local arts organizations. In return, we ask that the event organizers include our target audience (e.g. youth, minorities, underprivileged), that they expand the program outside Quito, and that they foster interaction between the artist and the audience. For example, we recently gave a grant to an American music teacher at a local university to bring four jazz musicians to Ecuador for concerts and master classes. He organized the events with our assistance -- PAS assisted in promoting the events, expanded the master class invitation list to include representatives from our target audience, gave tickets to our contacts, arranged press interviews, and put the grantee in contact with partners outside the capital that could organize activities in that city.

JEWELL